THE JUDGMENT OF Mr. Baxter CONCERNING CEREMONIES AND Conformity.

WITH

A SHORT REFLECTION

upon a Scandalous PAMPHLET, Intituled,

A Propoſition for the Safety and Happineſs of the KING *and* KINGDOM.

IN

A LETTER to a GENTLEMAN

of the *Houſe of Commons.*

LONDON,

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SIR,

I Suppoſe the Pamphlet which you ſent me, was deſigned rather to let me ſee the Impudence of this Licentious Age, than to draw me into the Impertinence of Anſwering it. The Lameneſs of the Style, the Senſe, and the Coherence, but eſpecially the Weakneſs of what he calls Arguments, *make me aſhamed to deal with ſuch an Adverſary. Yet in running it over, I could not but obſerve this one Confeſſion:* It is not the Dignity of the Biſhops, their Lordſhips and Revenues; It is not their Cathedrals, Organs, and their Divine Service in what State and Magnificence they pleaſe; It is not Common-Prayer, no nor any Ceremony of the Church whatſoever for all its ſignificancy, if it *P.* 18, 19.

be but a circumſtance of Worſhip, and no more, that could hinder moſt of the Sober *Nonconformiſts* to come over to you; but it is theſe Declarations, Subſcriptions, and Oaths which you impoſe on them in your Acts.

Now, though I think it no hard matter to make it appear, That theſe Declarations, Subſcriptions, *and* Oaths, *contain nothing in them but what is abſolutely neceſſary to the Safety of the Church and State; and that thoſe men who refuſe to make ſuch Acknowledgments and Engagements, are utterly unfit to be intruſted with the Cure of Souls, and the Office of* Preaching *to the People; which, like other good things, as it is excellent in the Uſe, ſo is it no leſs dangerous in the Abuſe: Yet ſuppoſing, for once, that theſe* Oaths *and* Subſcriptions *were as unlawful, as they would have the World believe; What is this to*

thoſe

those that are not required to Subscribe *or* Swear? *Is not this a plain Acknowledgement, that notwithstanding all these Clamors against the Governors, and the Ceremonies of the Church, yet there is indeed no just ground of separating from either, since no* Swearing *or* Subscription *is required of the Multitude, of which they so much boast, and whose Cause they pretend to plead? Of these, by their own Confession, as many as are* Judicious *and* Sober, *may* come over *and Conform: So that we have onely a few Factious Men (that call themselves Ministers) that make all this Noise; as if for their sakes, the* King *and* Parliament *must undoe all that they have done, for the Restoring of Religion and good Order in the Church, and preserving Peace in the State: and because the* City *and the* Ships *have been lately* burnt, *these Men that are well* P. 6.

skilled

skilled in blowing Coals, muſt have leave to ſet the whole Kingdom in a Flame.

The Worthy Gentlemen of your Houſe, will, I hope, conſider this: Which that you may not look upon only as an unwary word dropt from a looſe Pen, I ſhall add, for Confirmation, what I long ſince obſerved in a Book written by a great Rabbie of that Tribe, under the Title of Five Diſputations of Church-Government, and Worſhip: *Printed at* London, 1659. *A time, when he could have but ſmall encouragement to ſay more than he thought in this matter.*

THE

THE JUDGMENT OF Mr. Baxter CONCERNING CEREMONIES AND Conformity.

THose Modes or Circumstances of Worship, which are Necessary *in Genere*, but left undetermined by God *in Specie*, are left by God to humane Prudential Determination: (else an Impossibility should be necessary.) But many such there are, that are Necessary *in Genere*, but left undetermined of God *in Specie*; therefore many such are left to humane Prudential Determination. *Disp.* 4. *P.* 361.

§. 5. Yet it is in the Power of man to determine of such Modes and Circumstances as are necessary to the performance *Disp.* 5. *P.* 400.

performance of that Worſhip which God hath inſtituted in his Word: and therefore lawful Governors may in ſuch Caſes bind us by their Commands.

P. 400. 1. It is left to humane Determination, what *Place* the Publick Aſſemblies ſhall be held in.

P. 401. 2. It is left to man to determine of the *Time* of Holy Duties, except only where God hath determined of it already.

Ibid. 3. It is left to the Determination of humane Prudence, what *Utenſils* to employ about the Publick Worſhip of God.

Here therefore we muſt thus conclude,

P. 423. 1. That every miſordering of ſuch great affairs, is the ſin of them that do it.

2. But yet that the Subject is not exempted from Obedience by every ſuch miſtake of the Governor: but by ſome, he is.

§. 67. If the miſchooſing of ſuch Circumſtances, by Church-Governors, be but an Inconvenience, and do not deſtroy the Ordinance it ſelf, or fruſtrate the Ends of it, we are to obey: 1. For he is the Judge of his own work, and not we. 2. The thing is not ſinful, though inconvenient. 3. Obedience is commanded to our lawful Governors.

We muſt obey in all things lawful.

P. 424. And when we do obey in a Caſe of Miſcommanding, it is not a doing evil, that good may come of it, as ſome do miſconceive: but it is only a ſubmitting to that which is ill commanded, but not Evil in him that doth ſubmit. It is the Determiner that is the cauſe of the incon-

Inconvenience, and not the Obeyer. Nor is it inconvenient for me to Obey, though it be worse perhaps to him that Commandeth. While he sinneth in Commanding, he may make it my Duty to Obey.

§. 6. *Dist.* 4. We must distinguish between Ceremonies imposed by a *Lawful Magistrate*, or *Church-Governors*; and such as are imposed by *Usurpers*, or Men without Authority. P. 396.

§. 25. Prop. 12. *It may be very sinful to command some Ceremonies, which may lawfully, yea, must in Duty be used by the Subject when they are commanded.* P. 398.

§. 27. Prop. 14. *Yet certain things that are commonly called Ceremonies, may lawfully be used in the Church upon Humane Imposition; and when it is not against the Law of God, no person should disobey the Commands of their Lawful Governors in such things.*

Of Set-Forms, and the Book of Common-Prayer.

Prop. 1. A Stinted Liturgy is in it self Lawful. *Disp.* 4.

2. A Stinted Liturgy in some parts of Publick Holy Service, is ordinarily necessary. P. 358.

3. In the parts where it is not of Necessity, it may not only be submitted to, but desired, when the Peace of the Church requireth it.

7. The safest way of Composing such a Publick Form, is, to take it all, for Matter and Words, out of the Holy Scriptures. P. 359.

8. Yet is not this of such Necessity, but that we may joyn in it, or use it, if the Form of Words be not from Scripture.

Prop. 1. *A Stinted Liturgy is in it ſelf Lawful.*

This is thus proved:

Argument 1. *That which is not directly, or conſequentially forbidden by God, remaineth lawful: A ſtinted Liturgy is not directly, or conſequentially forbidden by God: therefore it remaineth lawful.*

The *Major* is undoubted, becauſe nothing but a Prohibition can make a thing unlawful. *Sin is a tranſgreſſion of a Law: where there is no Law, there is no Tranſgreſſion:* And yet I have heard very Reverend men anſwer this, *That it is enough that it is not commanded, though not forbidden.* Which is plainly to deny both Scripture and Civil Principles.

P. 361. Now for the *Minor*, *That a ſtinted Liturgy is not forbidden*, we need no other proof, than that no Prohibition can be produced.

P. 364. Argument 6. *If it be lawful for the People to uſe a ſtinted form of words in Publick Prayer, then is it in it ſelf lawful for the Paſtors: but it is lawful for the People:* for the Paſtors prayer (which they muſt pray over with him, and not only hear it) is a ſtinted Form to them, even as much as if he had learnt it out of a Book. They are to follow him in his method and words, as if it were a Book-prayer.

Argum. 7. *It is lawful to uſe a Form in Preaching: therefore a ſtinted Liturgy is lawful.*

1. Becauſe Preaching is a part of that Liturgy.
2. Becauſe the reaſon is the ſame for Prayer, as for that, in the main.

Arg.

Argument 8. *That which hath been the practice of the Church in Scripture-times, and down to this day, and yet the practice of almoſt all the Churches of Chriſt on earth, is not like to be unlawful: but ſuch is the uſe of ſome ſtinted forms of Publick Service: therefore, &c.* That it was ſo in the *Jews* Church, and approved by Chriſt, I have ſhewed. That it hath been of ancient uſe in the Church ſince Chriſt, and is at this day in uſe in *Africk*, *Aſia*, *Europe*, even among the Reformed Churches in *France*, *Holland*, *Geneva*, &c. is ſo well known, that I think I need not ſtand to prove it: yea, thoſe few that ſeem to diſuſe it, do yet uſe it, in *Pſalms*, and other parts of Worſhip.

As for the *Common-Prayer* it ſelf, I never rejected it becauſe it was a Form, nor thought it ſimply unlawful becauſe it was ſuch a Form; but have made uſe of it, and would do again in the like caſe. *P.* 421.

Of Ceremonies.

The Ceremonies controverted among us, were eſpecially, *The Surplice*, *the Geſture of Kneeling in receiving the Lords Supper*, *the Ring in Marriage*, *Laying the hand on the Book in taking an Oath*, *the Organs and Church-Muſick*, *Holy-dayes*, *Altars*, *Rails*, and the *Croſs in Baptiſm*. *P.* 409.

Of the Surplice.

Some decent Habit is neceſſary; either the Magiſtrate, or the Miniſter himſelf, or the Aſſociated Paſtors *P.* 409.

muſt determine what. I think neither Magiſtrate nor Synod ſhould do any more than hinder Undecency: But yet if they *do* more, and tye all to *One Habit* (and ſuppoſe it were an undecent Habit) yet this is but an *imprudent uſe of Power*. It is a thing within the Magiſtrates reach; he doth not an *aliene* work, but his own work amiſs: and therefore the thing *in it ſelf* being *lawful*, *I would obey him*, and uſe that garment, if I could not be diſpenſed with. Yea, though *Secondarily* the *Whiteneſs* be to ſignifie Purity, and ſo it be made a teaching ſign, yet would I obey.

Of Kneeling at the Sacrament.

P. 411. But yet, as ſinfully as this Geſture was impoſed, for my part I did obey the Impoſers, and would do, if it were to do again, rather than diſturb the Peace of the Church, or be deprived of its Communion. For God having made *ſome Geſture* neceſſary, and confined me to none, but left it to Humane Determination, I ſhall ſubmit to Magiſtrates in their proper work, even when they miſs it in the manner. I am not ſure that Chriſt intended the example of himſelf and his Apoſtles, as obligatory to us that ſhall ſucceed. I am ſure it proves *ſitting lawful*; but I am not ſure that it proves it *neceſſary*: (though *very convenient*.) But I am *ſure*, he hath *commanded me Obedience and Peace*.

Of the Ring in Marriage.

P. 411. And for the *Ring in Marriage*, I ſee no reaſon to ſcruple the lawfulneſs of it: For though the Papiſts make a *Sacrament* of *Marriage*, yet we have no reaſon to

to take it for any Ordinance of Divine Worſhip; any more than the ſolemnizing of a Contract between a Prince and People. All things are ſanctified and pure to the pure.

Of Organs and Church-Muſick.

And for *Organs*, or other *Inſtruments of Muſick* in Gods Worſhip, they being a Help partly *Natural*, and partly *Artificial*, to the exhilarating of the ſpirits, for the praiſe of God, I know no argument to prove them ſimply unlawful, but what would prove a *Cup of Wine* unlawful, or the *tune* and *meeter*, and *melody* of ſinging unlawful. *P.* 412.

Of Holy-dayes.

Nor for my part do I make any ſcruple * to keep a Day in Remembrance of any eminent ſervant of Chriſt, or Martyr, to praiſe God for their Doctrine or Example, and honour their Memorial. *P.* 412, 413.

* *In point of Lawfulneſs; For Conveniency is according to ſeveral accidents.*

But the hardeſt part of the Queſtion is, *Whether it be lawful to keep dayes, in celebrating the memorial of Chriſts Nativity, Circumciſion, Faſting, Transfiguration, Aſcenſion, and ſuch like?*

And yet for all this I am reſolved, if I live where ſuch Holy-dayes as theſe are obſerved, to cenſure no man for obſerving them; nor would I deny them Liberty to follow their judgments, if I had the power of their Liberties; provided they uſe not reproach and violence to others; and ſeek not to deprive them of their Liberties. *P.* 416.

Yea

P. 417. Yea more, I would not only give men their Liberty in this, but if I lived under a Government that peremptorily commanded it, I would obſerve the outward reſt of ſuch a Holy-day, and I would preach on it, and join with the Aſſemblies in Gods Worſhip on it. Yea, I would thus obſerve the day, rather than offend a weak Brother, or hinder any mans ſalvation, much more rather then I would make any diviſion in the Church.

Of Altars, and Rails.

Ibid. And for the next Ceremony, the *Name and form of an Altar*; no doubt it is a thing indifferent, whether the Table ſtand this way, or that way: and the Primitive Churches uſed commonly the names of *Sacrifice*, and *Altar*, and *Prieſt*, and I think, lawfully: for my part I ſhall not be he that ſhall condemn them.

Ibid. I conceive that the diſlike of theſe things in *England* (the form and name of an Altar, and the Rails about it) was not as if they were ſimply evil.

P. 401, 402. Whether we ſhall receive the Lords Supper at a Table, or in our ſeats; and whether the Table ſhall be of wood or ſtone? whether it ſhall be round, or long, or ſquare? whether it ſhall ſtand in the Eaſt or Weſt-end of the Temple, or in the middle? whether it ſhall have Rails, or no Rails? All theſe are left to humane prudence.

Of the Croſs in Baptiſm.

P. 417. But of all our Ceremonies, there is none that I have more ſuſpected to be *ſimply unlawful, than the Croſs in Baptiſm.*

Yet

Yet dare I not *peremptorily ſay, that it is unlawful:* nor will I *condemn either Ancients or Moderns that uſe it:* nor will I *make any diſturbance in the Church about it*, more then my own forbearance will make. P. 418.

I preſume not to cenſure them that judge it lawful; but only give the reaſons that make me doubt, and rather think it to be unlawful, though ſtill with a ſuſpition of my own underſtanding, and a love and honour to diſſenters.

Ambroſ. contr. Symmach.

Vnuſquiſque patienter ferat, ſi non extorqueatur Imperatori, quod moleſtè ferret, ſi ei extorquere cuperet Imperator.

FINIS.

FINIS.